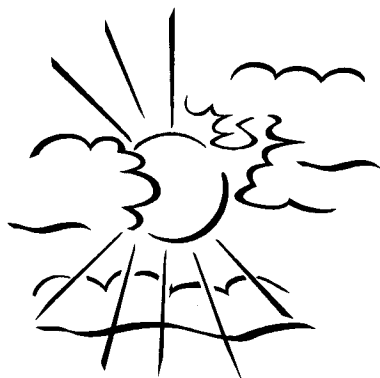


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Articles in Today's Clips

Tuesday, May 2, 2006

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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Father Faces Charges For Baby's Death

Police Continue To Investigate

POSTED: 12:02 pm EDT May 1, 2006

The man who police said killed his 9-month-old son is facing charges.

Rafael Thomas was arraigned Sunday morning in hospital bed at a local psychiatric ward on first-degree murder charges.

Thomas got in a fight with his live-in girlfriend and stormed out of their home with their baby. He stabbed the baby to death and was found by police stabbing himself.

Police apprehended Thomas, who had over 30 stab wounds on his body, and searched for the baby, who was later found in the yard of a nearby home, according to police.

The mother of the baby is not facing any charges.

Baby burned, grandmother charged

By [unclear] (two off) [unclear]
[unclear]@monroecounty.com

A 9-month-old Monroe County baby suffered hot water burns to his legs, and his grandmother has been charged with child abuse.

Cheryl Grahl, 50, of Newport is free on bond after she was charged with first-degree child abuse. However, Mrs. Grahl vehemently denied purposely injuring her grandson.

"I would never harm that child," Mrs. Grahl said Friday night. "I love that boy."

The child, Robbie C. Gredl III, was listed in stable condition in St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center, Toledo. He has first, second- and third-degree burns on both legs below the knees and both feet.

Monroe County sheriff's

detectives said the baby was put in the hot water. Mrs. Grahl denied that and said the baby climbed into her Jacuzzi and turned on the water himself. Mrs. Grahl and her husband, Tracy, said the boy has the ability to turn on the water in the tub.

"He can turn it on because he did," Mr. Grahl said.

Detective Joseph Hammond said his investigation showed that the burns were consistent with immersion and appeared to be deliberate.

"The injuries are inconsistent with her statement," Detective Hammond said. "The injuries are consistent with him being dropped into hot water."

The baby was injured Wednesday morning. Mrs. Grahl said she was watching Robbie as he was crawling around the home. She said she briefly lost sight of

him, then went to find him. She said that in a matter of two or three minutes he had crawled into the tub, turned it on and turned on the hot water.

Mrs. Grahl said she saw him standing in the water, then quickly grabbed him. The water began to fill the tub. Mrs. Grahl said she was shocked the burns were so severe. She said they rushed the baby to the hospital and met an ambulance on the way.

Mrs. Grahl has not yet been arraigned on the charges. They said the baby is at their home, one day a week and that they have cared for him since birth. The baby's mother, Jennifer Lowell, the father, Jonathan, and another child, II.

Police officials said the baby is expected to make a full recovery but he will have to undergo skin grafts.

4-29-06

Minister accused of sex assault

Tuesday, May 2, 2006

By Rex Hall Jr.

rhall@kalamazoogazette.com 388-7784

A former Sturgis church minister was arraigned Monday on charges of molesting a 13-year-old girl, authorities said.

Steven Lynn Ruger, who headed Sturgis Church of Christ, was arrested Saturday at his Sherman Township home after an investigation into allegations by the girl, Sturgis Police said.

Ruger, 42, was arraigned in St. Joseph County District Court on third- and fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct charges and was being held in the county jail on \$100,000 bond this morning.

A woman who answered the phone this morning at Sturgis Church of Christ said Ruger resigned last month. She said church officials would have no further comment.

Investigators began looking into the case Friday after the girl told officials at her school that she had been "victimized" by Ruger while in his care in the 900 block of North Lakeview Street, a news release said.

Detective Sgt. Luis Rosado said police executed a search warrant Monday at the church's offices, 907 N. Lakeview St.

Rosado said Ruger and the girl's family were friends, but that he did not know if they attended the church.

Ruger is scheduled to be back in court May 11 for a preliminary examination, at which a judge will determine whether there is enough evidence to send the case to trial. Third-degree criminal sexual conduct is a felony punishable by up to 15 years in prison. Fourth-degree is a misdemeanor punishable by up to two years in prison.

Aunt accused of injecting boy; grandmother allegedly allowed drug use

PUBLISHED: May 2, 2006

By Norb Franz
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

One assistant prosecutor has dubbed it the "house of horrors."

Law enforcement officials claim the three-bedroom ranch on Cottage Lane in Warren was home to drug use and prostitution while several children lived there.

Some of those kids are expected to reveal the sordid details today when they are scheduled to testify at a preliminary hearing in 37th District Court for an aunt and their grandmother, who face criminal charges after a 12-year-old boy nearly died, police said, after being injected with heroin Jan. 24.

After police obtained a warrant and conducted a 2-week manhunt that culminated in the arrest of Jacqueline Ellen Vuich, the 24-year-old aunt has remained in jail, charged with possessing the drug and sticking the boy near his elbow with the near-fatal dosage as he ate spaghetti. She has denied the allegations.

The boy's grandmother, Jan Ruby Catton, rented the house near 10 Mile Road and Groesbeck. Catton faces charges of child abuse, maintaining a drug house and keeping a house of prostitution.

Prosecutors and social service workers have teamed to strip the 46-year-old grandparent of the guardianship she held over several of her grandchildren, although Catton's attorney claims she has voluntarily relinquished those rights in an effort to cooperate with officials. Other children could follow.

Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith, a former assistant prosecutor in the sex crimes unit before being elected to the top post in 2004, said recently: "These may be the worst parents I've ever seen, parents or grandparents."

The child abuse charges against Catton are of the second-degree -- a 4-year felony offense in which a defendant is accused of committing an act that's likely to cause physical or mental harm to a minor.

Catton's attorney, Susan Chrzanowski, said Monday she sees no evidence that Catton allowed drug use or prostitution in the home and that if it did occur, it happened while she was at work.

"She has only tried to cooperate with the investigation and tried to do what is best for her family and tried to keep the family together," Chrzanowski said. "All Ms. Catton was, was a woman who loved and cared for her grandchildren to the best of her ability and struggled with her own daughter's addiction.

"I feel prosecutors are trying to say she should have just completely wiped her daughter from her life," she added.

At her arraignment in March, Catton repeatedly said, "I'm not guilty." She told District Judge Dawnn Gruenburg she's never been in trouble and that she previously asked the judge to put her daughter in jail.

Warren police confirmed Catton reported Sept. 24, 2005, that one of her granddaughters whom she had legal guardianship of, as missing. The 14-year-old girl came home at 3:30 a.m. One month later, police arrested the teenager at the Cottage Lane home as an escapee from the Macomb County youth home, police said.

One of Catton's other daughters, Jamie Nash, has denied that the Cottage Lane house was used for prostitution, and defended her mother as an innocent, doting grandmother.

"She took very well care of those babies," Nash said recently.

Catton, who works on the assembly line at DaimlerChrysler's Jefferson Avenue Plant, is free on \$300,000 surety bond, which typically requires a 10 percent payment to a bail bond company and collateral such as a property deed.

After relatives took the unconscious 12-year-old boy, whose name is not being published by The Macomb Daily, to Henry Ford Bi-County Hospital on Jan. 24, a hospital staffer contacted Macomb County Child Protective Services. Authorities removed all the children from that home, including five for whom Catton had legal guardianship.

The youths who resided there range from 7 months to 15 years old. All are siblings or cousins.

Some reported they were told to dump uncapped syringes in a sewer near the front yard, Smith said. Warren police officers recovered 40 syringes in the sewer.

"House of horrors," said Jennifer Andary, the assistant prosecutor on the case.

Andary, head of the domestic violence unit in the prosecutor's office, said Catton was a danger to the children and committed "vile, atrocious behavior."

The 975-square-foot ranch on Cottage Lane is a rental property owned by Bill and Kathleen McCullen of Harrison Township, according to city of Warren rental registration records obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. With nine children removed from the home by the Family Independence Agency and placed in foster care, Catton has since moved to Roseville.

"They were fairly decent tenants," said John Meesseman, president of GMAC Real Estate/The Kee Group, which manages the property for the McCullens. He said he and other Kee Group employees never saw anything unusual in the house while maintaining it.

"Neighbors never complained either," said Meesseman, who added that he was stunned to learn what allegedly occurred inside.

"I almost fell out of my chair," he said. "It was unbelievable. They seemed like nice people."

City inspectors conducted their last inspection of the rental home in October 2005, and the property has a valid registration certificate until April 2007.

"On our record, there were no complaints filed on this property," Warren Communications Director Joe Munem said.

In addition to the criminal defendants, prosecutors have been busy working with the Family Independence Agency. John Ange, head of the prosecutors' Juvenile Court unit, confirmed the court now holds temporary jurisdiction over five of Catton's grandchildren, including Vuich's 3 1/2-year-old daughter.

"Those guardianships (held by Catton) are dissolved," he said. It was not immediately clear why Catton is the legal guardian to several of the minors.

For now, all the kids remain in foster care, officials said.

Ange said he did not know why Catton had legal guardianship over several of her daughters' children, but said: "A lot of people thing just because guardianship is in place the mothers no longer have responsibility (for the children). There's still an obligation by the parent. Obligation to pay support, obligation to visit the child."

Vuich's estranged husband is seeking custody of their only child.

Mike Vuich III filed for divorce Jan. 31 -- one week after the 12-year-old boy overdosed. The couple married in October 2002, 23 days after the birth of their daughter, according to Macomb County Circuit Court records. In his divorce filing, Mike Vuich provides no detailed reasons, but notes the couple separated in November 2004. Attempts to reach the

New Haven resident for comment were unsuccessful.

Before hiring her own lawyer, Jacqueline Vuich briefly was represented by defense attorney Richard Marcil. Marcil said Vuich denies injected her nephew.

"She went upstairs to take a shower, came back down and (he) was made gurgling noises," he said.

When he testifies today before 37th District Judge Walter Jakubowski, the 12-year-old boy could be grilled by his relatives' defense attorneys about the statements he made as he regained consciousness.

Marcil said the boy initially told a doctor he was given a powdered substance. But he later told a Warren detective his aunt injected him in his arm, officials familiar with the case said.

"It's a big inconsistency," Marcil said.

Warren Detective Cpl. Ken Marsee, the lead investigator in the case, said the 12-year-old's blood tested positive for heroin.

Vuich's current attorney, Timothy Barkovic, could not be reached for comment.

If ordered to stand trial and subsequently convicted of delivery of less than 50 grams of a controlled substance to a minor, Vuich's punishment could range from one to 40 years behind bars. The heroin possession charge she faces carries a 4-year prison term.

She is no stranger to jail cells. Her criminal history includes shoplifting, assault, trying to cash a phony paycheck and destruction of police property. The lengthy record could contribute to a longer prison term if she's convicted of the current drug charges in Warren.

Tuesday, May 02, 2006

The Detroit News

Join program to save lives, cut medical costs Hospitals, businesses needed in push for better care

Health care spending in southeast Michigan is in the vicinity of \$37 billion per year. And the cost of health care is rising at the rate of 9 to 12 percent annually. More Michigan businesses and health care providers need to join an effort to slow this spending.

A number of major players in the southeast Michigan health care market, from the Big Three automakers to large hospital groups, have created a program called Save Lives, Save Dollars. The goal of the project is to cut health care costs by \$500 million over three years or slow the rate of increase by 1 percent to 3 percent.

But they need more help. Vernice Davis Anthony, president of the Greater Detroit Health Council, says the group needs more private firms, health providers and local governments to sign on to its pay-for-performance model to both increase the quality of medical care and reduce cost. They'll get there by putting in place universal standards for care and rewarding those who meet the standards.

The group notes that reducing the region's 6,422 annual cases of surgical infections could save an estimated \$16 million a year. It could also save lives. Patients who develop infections at the site of their surgeries are two times more likely to die. They are five times more likely to have to be readmitted to hospitals, which drives up the cost of care.

Changes in procedures to reduce infections could have a huge effect on both the cost and quality of a surgical patient's care.

That's just one example.

There is also a huge disparity in the rate at which local hospitals make pneumonia vaccinations available to patients, ranging from less than 10 percent of the appropriate patients to 90 percent.

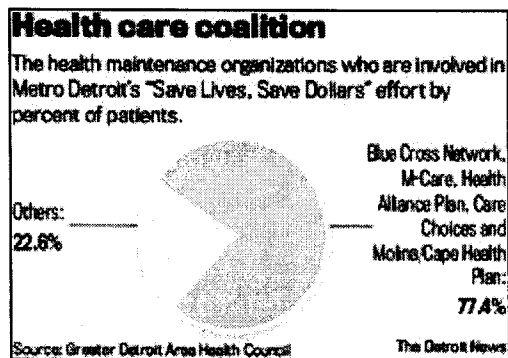
One goal of the group is to create a Web site that makes this information widely available and encourage companies, their health care insurers and patients themselves to choose the providers who have good records on these issues, says Kate Kohn-Parrott, a health care specialist for DaimlerChrysler.

Hopefully, the pressure will bring up the standard of care for health care providers who aren't now meeting the requirements of the Save Lives, Save Dollars Program.

This attention is needed to counter the current incentives in the health care system, in which less efficient, lower quality health care results in more revenue for providers.

Nancy Schlichting, president of the Henry Ford Health System, says that when her organization began putting in place these guidelines, revenue dropped by \$3 million.

That's a negative incentive, and it needs to change. If all southeast Michigan health care buyers join the Save Lives, Save Dollars program, it will.



New health center Downtown clinic great step in caring for uninsured

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, May 02, 2006

The new Urban Health and Wellness Center in Flint is an example of how medical insurance gaps can be filled cheaply and with a minimum of bureaucracy. It's just a matter of extending it far enough into the uninsured population.

The new nurse-run clinic, housed at the University of Michigan-Flint White Building, will provide primary health care and physical therapy to 2,000 people the first year - individuals for whom care has been elusive, if not unattainable, because of the unevenness of the American insurance system.

This clinic did not start as a single inspiration, but grew as a next step to follow the Genesee Health Plan - a program of free care to low-income adults aged 19 to 64, funded by government and private charity. The health plan is a partner of the clinic and a source of its patients, some of whom will be students enrolled at local colleges. The wellness center will instruct them on nurturing good health rather than just treating illnesses.

While we applaud this clinic's opening as an advance for health care locally, we cannot ignore how much more is needed, especially in light of a new Massachusetts plan that extends coverage vastly throughout that state. There, poor people with no coverage stand to get free or heavily subsidized insurance, while those who can afford but choose not to get coverage will get increasing tax penalties unless they obtain such protection. People already insured should see at least a slight drop in premiums.

Of course, Michigan, because of its size and sociology, would have a more difficult time undertaking that ambitious a program, although if it works for Massachusetts other states will want to adopt their own versions.

Meanwhile, the availability of health care is advancing here, too, in smaller formations. The great work of UM-Flint and the Genesee Health Plan are vivid proof. The real test of their success will come as initial funding runs out and a new and permanent source has to be found. Perhaps then the Massachusetts plan will provide the model.

Insured or not, health care available

Tuesday, May 2, 2006

By Chris Meehan cmeehan@kalamazoogazette.com 388-8412

If you have no health insurance, Jane Zwiers wants to talk to you.

The director of the First Presbyterian Church Health Clinic says she wants to pass the word to the uninsured that medical and dental care is available -- and for free -- in this community.

Lucinda Stinson is also hoping to get this potentially life-saving message to the nearly 30,000 people in Kalamazoo County who have no medical insurance.

As director of managed care for the Kalamazoo County Health Plan, Stinson is using this week -- designated National Cover the Uninsured Week -- to let people know that county-funded health-care services are available through the Family Health Center.

Operating four area clinics for people with little or no medical insurance, the Family Health Center is in the process of doubling its capacity to provide services to those in need, Stinson said.

"It's not that there isn't care available. We just need to get the people who need it to come in to one of the clinics," Stinson said.

Zwiers said her clinic, staffed by volunteer doctors and nurses, operated for many years out of the basement of First Presbyterian Church in downtown Kalamazoo. It recently reopened at a new location, 2918 Portage St.

"We're open to patients to walk in the door," Zwiers said. "People just need navigation. They need a leg up -- someone to help them use the health-care system effectively."

Local events marking this week include:

- First Presbyterian Health Clinic is asking people who have no prescription-drug coverage to come in for help. The clinic will be open from 9 a.m. to noon, 1 to 4 p.m. and 5 to 7 p.m. today, Wednesday and Thursday to provide medication assistance. For information, call 344-0044.
- Borgess Medical Center, 1521 Gull Road, is offering help from 1 to 6 p.m. today and Wednesday to those who need to sign up for the new Medicare Part D drug plan. For information, call 226-5998.
- The Family Health Center, 117 W. Paterson St., is offering free physicals from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday to those without health insurance. Information on the county-sponsored health plan also will be available. Emergency prescription assistance will be

offered from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. through Friday. In addition, free testing for diabetes will take place from 9 to 11 a.m. on Friday at the Family Health Center-South, 2030 Portage Road. For information, call 349-2641.

Assistance for uninsured available here this week

Kalamazoo Gazette Tuesday, May 2, 2006

By Sr. Mary Joan Walsh SSJ

Being left behind without health care access has many dire consequences. Studies show that, compared to insured people, uninsured women who develop breast cancer are twice as likely to die, uninsured men are 50 percent more likely to be diagnosed at a late stage for colon cancer.

Kalamazoo County agencies, the First Presbyterian Church Health Clinic, the Family Health Center, both Kalamazoo hospitals, and many other outstanding local organizations are working together to help the uninsured in Kalamazoo County year-round. These groups are jointly offering two local activities to help those without health care insurance during Cover the Uninsured Week 2006.

Today, Wednesday and Thursday, medication assistance will be available at the First Presbyterian Church Health Clinic, 2918 Portage St. Hours of assistance are: 9 to noon, 1 to 4 p.m. and 5 to 7 p.m. This clinic can help individuals who are Kalamazoo County residents, have no prescription drug coverage, and meet financial eligibility guidelines. Participants are asked to bring written prescriptions for all medications.

For more information and additional eligibility guidelines, call the First Presbyterian Church Health Clinic, 344-0044.

Area residents who have not yet signed up for Medicare Part D are invited to come to the Borgess Medical Center Atrium Entrance, 1521 Gull Road, today and Wednesday. Enrollment advice will be offered from 1 to 6 p.m. each day. Because the process takes 30 minutes, participants are asked to register in advance by calling the Borgess Community Relations Office at 226-5998. Participants are asked to bring their Medicare card and a list of medications they are taking. The final day to register for Medicare Part D, without penalty, is May 15. Eligible persons who do not sign up by May 15 will incur a 1 percent per month penalty when they do sign up.

Free physicals for the uninsured and enrollment assistance in the Kalamazoo County Health Plan and/or MI Child will be offered at the Family Health Center, 117 W. Paterson St., Kalamazoo, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Wednesday. Also, emergency prescription assistance will be offered from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., today, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday at the Family Health Center. Call 349-2641 for additional information.

The plight of the uninsured is everyone's concern. More information is available at www.covertheuninsuredweek.org. Nobody should be left behind.

Sr. Mary Joan Walsh, Sisters of St. Joseph, is vice president of mission integration for the Borgess Health Alliance in Kalamazoo.

Bill aims to lower health care cost for small businesses

Tuesday, May 02, 2006

By Sarah Kellogg
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON -- Making health insurance more affordable for small-business owners may help them extend health care benefits to more workers in Michigan and elsewhere.

Supporters say that would be the effect of legislation the U.S. Senate is considering this week to allow small businesses to partner with one another to purchase reduced-price health insurance for their employees.

"Through pools, you're able to spread the cost out a little bit better and spread the cost increases out better from year to year," said Scott Lyon, vice president for small business services for the Small Business Association of Michigan, a state business trade group. "Hopefully, you can negotiate better prices, since right now most small businesses have almost no leverage in the marketplace."

The bill's sponsors say that double-digit increases in health care premiums in recent years caused many small businesses to drop employee coverage. They predict this bill might slow or stop that practice.

"Our health care system is pushing too many into the ranks of the uninsured," said Sen. Mike Enzi, R-Wyo., the bill's main sponsor. "The strain of that burden is being felt by millions, and millions want the kind of relief our bill offers."

National insurance groups have endorsed the legislation, saying it will allow small businesses to join trade groups to create so-called association health plans for the first time. Those plans would be fully funded, not self-funded, and thus purchased from insurers.

One of the biggest concerns about the bill, say opponents, is that it would eliminate state-level consumer protections that prohibit insurance companies from charging vastly different rates for health insurance for individuals based on age, race or gender.

In addition, while state officials would supervise the plans, coverage would not be required to include state-mandated benefits, such as certain types of health screenings, including mammograms.

"Ensuring access to cancer screenings and treatments is critical in the nation's efforts to reduce cancer deaths," said John Seffrin, chief executive officer of the American Cancer Society. "This bill would do more harm than good."

For example, Michigan and 45 other states, require state-regulated insurers to cover diabetes supplies, medication and treatment. The Senate bill would allow insurers to bypass those regulations.

The bill would require small-business health plans to sell at least one policy that parallels a plan offered state employees in one of the five most-populous states, California, Texas, New York, Florida or Illinois.

The Granholm administration has come out against the bill, urging Michigan's two senators, Democrats Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow, to oppose it when it reaches the Senate floor. Neither Stabenow nor Levin has taken a position on the bill.

"With 46 million uninsured Americans, including more than 1 million in Michigan, Congress needs to address health care access and rising costs," said Liz Boyd, Granholm's press secretary. We believe this bill would take us in the wrong direction."

But the bill's supporters say something needs to be done, since so many employees working for small businesses do not have health benefits or are losing them.

"The Senate has a critical opportunity to make a real difference for small businesses, their employees and their families," said Todd Stottlemeyer, president and chief executive officer of the National Federation of Independent Business, a trade association representing small businesses.

Only 47 percent of the smallest U.S. companies, those with between three and nine employees, offer workers health care coverage, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, a nonprofit group that tracks U.S. health care trends. The study shows that 72 percent of small employers with between 10 and 24 workers offer some form health benefits.

Hidden Harvest food service growing; fund-raiser planned

Tony Lascari, Midland Daily News

04/30/2006

Hidden Harvest is growing quickly in its new facility in Saginaw as it redistributes surplus food to those in need.

Richard Premo, president and CEO of Hidden Harvest, said the 682,000 pounds of food distributed so far this year in the Tri-Counties tops the amount for all of 2001.

"It's a pretty basic idea," he said. "We don't waste food and give it to people who need it. It's surplus food that hopefully people can put to good use."

He said the organization set a goal of distributing 1.2 million pounds of food for the year and the new facility is adding to its ability to reach people in need.

"We've got some great support from the Midland community and the Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation," he said.

Local companies and restaurants donate food, which is distributed to area soup kitchens, shelters and hunger-relief organizations at no charge. About 20 agencies are served in Midland and about 300,000 pounds of food are expected to be delivered in Midland this year.

Premo said Monday's 11th annual Hidden Harvest Cooks! event could help raise money to cover increasing costs for operating trucks that deliver the food.

"It literally does keep our trucks on the road, and this year with gas prices up it's scaring us a little, so we're really hoping it's a good event," he said.

Local chefs and guest appearances will highlight event from 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Monday at Horizons Conference Center, 6200 State St., in Saginaw.

"It's really a culinary extravaganza," Premo said. "It's going to be everything related to good food and good food ideas."

There will be ideas for setting tables, a cookbook area and more from 38 exhibitors.

Northwood University's Delite Zitta is scheduled to take part at 5:30 p.m.

"She's doing a turkey chili," Premo said of the chef, who has participated for four or

five years.

Tickets cost \$10 for adults and \$3 for children between 5 and 12 years old. They are available in Midland at the Northwood Gallery, Pastries by T and Peel N' Pare.

"People come a little hungry and leave pretty full," Premo said.

Proceeds from the event will support Hidden Harvest's work of redistributing the tens of thousands of pounds of surplus food each month from restaurants, grocery stores, hospitals and other health department-certified businesses. The food is given to more than 170 mid-Michigan soup kitchens, shelters and hunger-relief organizations at no charge.

Anyone bringing a can of food to the event will receive a free raffle ticket for the evening. For more information, call Hidden harvest at (989) 753-4749.

Published May 2, 2006
[From the Lansing State Journal]

Youth offenders scared by jail tour

Adult parolees warn juveniles to straighten Up now

By Lisa Roose-Church
Associated Press

HOWELL - Once a month, Livingston County youth offenders get an opportunity to learn firsthand where criminal behavior can land them - in jail - through a program that partners them with adult probationers and parolees.

It's similar to the "Scared Straight" program made famous by the 1978 documentary movie of the same name.

The 16-step Moral Reconation Therapy - known as MRT - is a behavioral treatment program designed to teach offenders how to re-evaluate their decisions. It's a process that seeks to raise the moral decision-making strategy of individuals, according to the MRT Web site.

"Hopefully, this is something that will stay in their minds and change their way of thinking," said Paul Wojewuczki, manager of Livingston County Community Corrections.

Research shows MRT treatment leads to lower recidivism rates, improvements in personality variables, enhanced treatment compliance and high staff satisfaction.

Each month, juvenile offenders listen to adult offenders regarding their past experiences with alcohol, drugs and criminal behavior.

The juveniles also tour the Livingston County Jail, which the adults make clear is a destination if the juveniles continue on their criminal paths.

Scott Etzel, who is a county juvenile officer, said he believes the program is beneficial to the participants because it allows the adults an opportunity to talk about their issues, such as alcoholism or drug use, as well as discuss the judicial process from an experienced person's view.

It also benefits the juveniles to hear about the result of the path they may be walking, Etzel noted.

"This is reality-based," he said.

The Livingston County MRT program, in its second year, is promoted through the Michigan Department of Corrections, which provides a grant to fund the program.

Officials at Community Corrections - which is commonly referred to as ASSET Building, also known as Assessment, Supervision, Support, Evaluation and Treatment - oversee the program.

Statewide, MRT has been implemented in juvenile boot camps, in educational "at-risk" student programs, in juvenile drug courts and at residential juvenile facilities.

Juvenile drug courts report consistently high completion rates and lower recidivism among MRT participants, according to a 2004 study that reviewed 20 published reports on the use of MRT with juveniles.

"We hope this intervention ... can make a difference in a kid's life," said David Trudeau, assistant county juvenile officer.

NEWS: Local/Regional

Prison leads man to new life counseling teens

BY KIRSTEN FREDRICKSON NEWS-REVIEW STAFF
WRITER

Monday, May 1, 2006 2:57 PM EDT

HARBOR SPRINGS - At 47 years old, experience has taught Michael McTevia that certain choices cannot only destroy your life, they can take your life away.

After having seen his world from behind prison cell bars for nearly a decade, McTevia is now passing along the knowledge he's gained to at-risk teens in Charlevoix and Emmet counties. As a speaker for "From Decisions to Actions," a program through North Country Community Mental Health, he aims to tell kids like it is.

"Addiction can destroy your life. I lost a lot - marriages, jobs and money," he said. "I'm not saying this could happen. I'm saying this did happen."

It all started when McTevia was just 15 years old. That's when he took his first sip of alcohol. But it wasn't long, McTevia noted, that the alcohol use became frequent. That led to experimentation with drugs like marijuana, which eventually led to harder drugs like cocaine.

Life continued to spiral downward for McTevia during those early adult years. His decisions to use both alcohol and drugs, now addictions that were destroying his life, led to other negative choices such as stealing and armed robbery.

"I try to tell the kids where decisions will lead," McTevia said.

His decisions led him straight to prison, where nine years of his life were spent behind steel bars.

"Prison, it saved my life," said McTevia, who noted that in prison "you either do the time or you let the time do you. I used my time

while I was there. I got to a point where I knew there was a better life for me.”

So McTevia began the long recovery process for his addictions and began taking life transition courses so that he would be better equipped to handle life outside the prison walls.

But that seems like another lifetime ago.

McTevia, who moved to Harbor Springs in 2003, has been in recovery now for nine years. He has seen his life come back to him. He now works as a carpenter and has discovered a healthy balance - spiritually, emotionally and psychologically - to his life. He now gives backs to his community.

“I have found that by giving my experience to the youth I might have a chance to save someone else from the mistakes I made,” he said smiling. “In the AA program they say you can't keep what you can't give away.”

So when McTevia learned about the “From Decisions to Actions” program from a friend he knew it was the perfect opportunity to give away what he had learned.

“From Decisions to Actions,” modeled after a program first started in Sault Ste. Marie, is a 10-week, mostly court-ordered program for at-risk youth in Charlevoix and Emmet counties. It is an intervention program that not only helps youth understand their choices, but also involves parents by teaching new parenting and decision making skills.

“I think it truly is a program for parents,” said program supervisor Dianne Dreyer. “About halfway through they form such a bond with the other parents.”

“From Decisions to Actions” utilizes volunteer mentors and speakers like McTevia to help stress to youth and their parents how to make good decisions and how to form stronger, healthier family relationships. Speakers throughout the program include crime victims, substance abuse counselors, police and then McTevia talking about his personal experience.

“He's very honest and straightforward. He tells it like it is,” Dreyer said. “He's young enough that the kids really listen.”

McTevia said he has gotten some great feedback from his role within the program, both from parents and from the youth he

speaks to.

“I think they can really identify with me. I see a lot of kids get to the point where they say ‘this could be me,’” he said. “I try to stress to the kids that they are worth something.”

McTevia said he also tries to stress the importance of creating a positive relationship with parents and family members.

“My family members were the only ones there for me. The people I did drugs with and the dealers who supported my habit weren't there,” he said.

It's that kind of message Dreyer said she hopes gets across. And that stronger families are built out of the program.

“I am so proud of this program,” she said. “I would really love to see it in the schools, to get it to them before they get in trouble.”

McTevia echoed the sentiment.

“I really believe in this program,” he said.

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Helping sexual assault victims, young offenders

Kelly Nankervis, Midland Daily News

04/30/2006

Helping the survivors of sexual assault is an obvious need, and helping youthful offenders is becoming more so.

A recent workshop, sponsored by the Shelterhouse and Midland Kids First, titled "The Impact of Sexual Assault on Victims and Communities," focused on both topics.

"Ending sexual violence really means looking at all aspects of this issue," said Sharon Mortensen, Shelterhouse executive director.

"It takes an incredible amount of community input to treat and integrate," sex offenders, said Midland County Circuit Court Judge Paul J. Clulo, adding the idea that offenders can't be treated is one of many myths about sexual violence.

Joyce Siegel, program director of Sexual Assault Services in Battle Creek, talked about victims of sexual assault.

It's not uncommon for victims to be calm, ignoring what happened to them, and putting off making police reports. "They know darn well if they're going to tell this, their lives will be different," Siegel said. "And they don't tell.

"This is just plain normal behavior," she continued, adding that reports of rape made well after a crime occurred shouldn't be discounted.

Midland County Prosecutor Michael Carpenter said in Midland County the average time between a rape and a police report varies, with some victims reporting one day after the crime and others waiting as long as 12 years.

Juveniles who commit sex crimes also present a challenge for officials in terms of providing treatment, as well as maintaining the safety of the community and the victim, said Meredith L. Ray-LaBatt, director of the Adolescent Sexual Abuser/ Offender Project. Juveniles often have a long history of sexual abuse and other risk factors, but can be treated and are less likely to commit the crime again.

Depending on the risk posed to the community, juveniles can be treated in different ways, such as through day treatment, residential treatment or inpatient psychiatric facilities. Treatment also depends on the participation of parents -- to supervise the youth while at home or not in school, inclusion in school clubs, trips to restaurants and

involvement in peer groups -- social workers and clinicians, she said.

CSC convictions helped by early reporting of crime

Officials say sexual assault is rarely reported, and Midland County isn't an exception.

Of all the crimes charged through the Midland County Prosecutor's Office, 4 percent are sex-related.

"That's only the reported crimes," Prosecutor Mike Carpenter said. "Criminal sexual conduct and assaultive crimes are done in secret, behind closed doors in a time and place where no one can catch you."

There were more people charged with sexual assault in 2005 than in the five previous years, he said, adding first- and third- degree criminal sexual assault charges are the most common.

Prosecution of the cases becomes more difficult the longer the victim waits to make the report, Carpenter said, because it helps the defense attorney to develop a motive for the victim to fabricate the assault, and the victims ability to recall details of the crime is reduced.

"The faster we get the cases to come in, the better the chance we have for a conviction," he said.

Midland nurses trained to care for, collect evidence from victims

This fall, Midland is joining a group of cities that have specially trained nurses to care for and collect evidence from sexual assault victims.

At a recent Shelterhouse seminar, the handful of MidMichigan Medical Center nurses trained to be sexual assault nurse examiners were introduced.

Denise Lenk, RN, has been a nurse for 30 years and has worked in the emergency room nearly half that time.

In the past, when victims would arrive at the ER, she and others would refer to the visit as an "alleged assault," on a board used to keep track of patients. The training she received changed that approach.

"We soon found that wasn't appropriate," she said of the practice.

The training they went through included learning how to perform pelvic exams, riding on shifts with the Midland Police and the Midland County Sheriff's Office, and visiting the Michigan State Police Bridgeport Crime Lab to watch a rape kit be processed.

They will be on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, she said, adding sexual assault victims no longer will wait in triage but rather will be taken straight to a room.

"We are nurses first," she said, stressing they will take care of all medical needs as well as collect evidence for rape kits.

He killed mother, gets prison

Rochester Hills teen stabbed her 111 times because she interrupted 'mission from God'; he waived right to trial.

Mike Martindale / The Detroit News

May 2, 2006

PONTIAC -- A Rochester Hills teenager who investigators said stabbed his mother 111 times because she interrupted his "mission from God" to kill pedophiles, abortion doctors and U.S. Sen. John Kerry, was sentenced Monday to 25 to 37 1/2 years in prison.

As part of a sentencing agreement to avoid trial, Christopher Dankovich, 16, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in the April 24, 2005, death of his mother, Diane Michele.

Investigators said Michele, 49, was stabbed 111 times by Dankovich after she confronted him about visiting pornographic Web sites on his computer and finding weapons-making materials under his bed.

"I don't know what else to say to you," said Oakland Circuit Judge John J. McDonald, after making sure Dankovich understood his rights to trial. "You're a young man and I feel very sorry for you. I hope you get the help you need."

Dankovich, who told McDonald he was sorry for what he had done, previously rejected a trial on the charge, despite his attorney Mitchell Ribitwer's opinion that a jury would have found Dankovich not criminally responsible for his actions.

Michele, a licensed hypnotherapist, was found by her mother, who went to the Rochester Hills home when no one answered telephone calls. Dankovich was arrested without incident at a family cottage in northern Michigan.

Investigators theorize Dankovich became upset after a meeting in which Michele threatened to take away his computer and ground him for misbehavior. Psychiatrist Harley Stock, who does evaluations of people believed to pose a risk to either the president or the nation, told McDonald last week that Dankovich believes he is on a "mission from God" and above the law.

"He didn't kill her because he was suddenly mad at her," Stock said to McDonald last week. "... She disrupted the mission from God."

McDonald said Monday, after reviewing the case, he was concerned for Dankovich.

"In many homicides there is a reason for the crime, not necessarily a good reason, but a reason," McDonald said. "I don't see one here at all. If you did it once, could you do it again?"

Dankovich told McDonald that he was not a violent person and that he knew killing his mother was wrong.

Dankovich will go to a state prison for young offenders in the Thumb until he is 21. It reportedly has a psychiatric team.

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Judge Bars Subsidy Cuts In Adopting Foster Children

By ERIK ECKHOLM

A federal judge in Missouri yesterday blocked a state law that cut aid to parents adopting foster children, ruling that it violated federal statutes and the Constitution's equal protection clause.

The case had been watched by children's advocates nationally, who said the law, which passed last year as part of a broader effort to curb social spending, was a dangerous precedent that would undercut the adoption prospects of troubled children.

"We hope that this decision will stem efforts around the country to find inventive ways to cut budgets while harming voiceless populations," said Ira P. Lustbader, a lawyer with Children's Rights, a group in New York that joined in the case with local advocates and parents' groups. "This law made no sense as a

Missouri tried to cut costs, but critics feared harmful results.

legal matter, as a policy matter or as an economic matter."

Gov. Matt Blunt, a Republican, had pushed the law, saying that adoption subsidies were spiraling out of control and that it made sense to focus money on the neediest parents. The governor did not issue a statement yesterday.

Hours after the ruling, by Judge Scott O. Wright of United States District Court in St. Louis, the state filed a notice of appeal with the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, a spokesman for the state attorney general's office, John Fougere, said.

The state said that such subsidies cost it \$60 million a year and that the law would save it \$12 million.

Critics said that by discouraging adoptions the law would end up costing the state more over time in foster expenses and in later social costs, because so many former foster children end up homeless, with drug problems or in prison.

Finding permanent homes for foster children who cannot return to their biological parents is a national goal, backed up by federal, state and local subsidies for adoptive parents who are often taking on children with

cognitive or medical disabilities. In Missouri, such payments can range from \$225 to \$650 a month, depending on needs for therapy or other special care.

The law required adoptive parents to reapply for subsidies annually, voiding contracts that had guaranteed aid to age 18. For a subgroup of parents, whose children were not covered by a federal program that bars means tests, it ended aid if the parents earned more than 200 percent of the poverty line, or \$38,314 a year for a family of four.

In August, Judge Wright temporarily delayed invoking the law. After a one-day trial last week, he issued a permanent injunction yesterday, saying that the annual renewal of subsidy agreements violated federal law and that the means test was discriminatory because it applied just to a subgroup without rational justification.

"The means test will not save taxpayer money, but will increase the overall cost of child welfare in the State of Missouri," he said. Several states have acted to curb adoption subsidies or eligibility, but the Missouri law went further than others by retroactively imposing means tests and other changes on parents who had adopted in the past.

Promoting the adoption of foster children who cannot return to their biological parents was a goal of federal laws passed in 1980 and 1997. Such adoptions have increased to 50,000 in recent years from 28,000 in 1996.

Related aid to parents has grown, reaching \$4 billion last year, with half paid by the federal government, according to a study in the March issue of *The Social Service Review*.

The increasing costs have drawn the scrutiny of financially beleaguered states.

If a subsidy cut discourages adoptions, that is likely to prove shortsighted, said Richard P. Barth, a professor of social welfare at the University of North Carolina. Professor Barth is a co-author of the March study, which found that the public cost of supporting a child in the foster system tended to surpass significantly any adoption subsidies.

"Our research shows that adoptive parents pay quite a substantial amount for services that their children need, and this is only partly offset by the subsidies they receive," Professor Barth said. "These parents are taking on a substantial challenge and deserve the appreciation of the public."



THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Book tells of internal and external travail of adoption

BOOKS

Monday, April 24, 2006

BY SONJA BRODIE

News Special Writer

Adopting a child is a daunting prospect and Theresa Reid describes in her first book how many difficult decisions and issues prospective parents face. "Two Little Girls: A Memoir of Adoption" (\$23.95, Berkley, 304 pages) tells the story of how Reid and her husband, pediatrician Marc Hershenson, came to adopt their two daughters, Natalie, now almost 10, and Lana, now six.

Along the way, they had to jump through bureaucratic hoops in the United States, Russia and Ukraine, flatter adoption agency staff and make hard decisions on which children to adopt. "The procedures are difficult and then fear was difficult," Reid says. "It's scary to adopt, bring home a child you don't know. You don't know how you're going to fall in love with this baby - you do, but it's kind of a mystery how that happens."

Ann Arbor resident Reid, a former executive director of a nonprofit organization in the field of child abuse, felt compelled to write the book. "I wrote it because I just had to. When we got home after adopting Lana, I was just overwhelmed with how difficult it had been emotionally and procedurally and I just had to write it. I thought, 'Oh my God, this story is so compelling, I need to write it down.'"

Adoption memoirs are a genre of their own. They provide an important testimony to the love among adoptive families, Reid says. However, she points out, authors often leave out the difficult times. "I think of them a little bit as sentimental fiction because often, not always, the only obstacles are external. The love is always at first sight - with a picture, a videotape - and all of the obstacles to fulfilling that love are bureaucratic, they are all on the outside and that just wasn't our reality, and I don't think it's the reality for most people."

Reid has decided to show readers the adoption process warts and all and her account is often brutally honest. "You don't fall in love at first sight, most biological parents don't fall in love at first sight," she says. Reid and her husband certainly didn't fall in love at first sight with Natalie's photo: They thought she looked like Boris Yeltsin.

One of the internal obstacles Reid had to overcome was the fact that her younger daughter was loving to everybody around her and didn't seem to realize for a long time that Reid was her mother - they didn't bond. "With Natalie, it was automatic, she glommed on me. She was Velcro baby," Reid says. "Lana taught me that love with a baby is like love with anybody else - give and take."

She adds, "Actually, I started writing the book before (the bonding) was accomplished. ... For a while I thought, I can't finish this book because it's not going to have a happy ending, but thank God it did."

Reid, who's got a doctorate in English from the University of Chicago, had a great time writing the memoir. "It was easy. I just wrote from the heart." She is now working on her second book.

"Two Little Girls" includes a resource list for prospective adoptive parents, which Reid updates regularly on her Web site, www.theresareidbooks.com. Her primary advice to anybody thinking about adopting is "to trust that they can love more broadly than they think - that's the most important thing."

Theresa Reid appears at the Shaman Drum Bookshop, 311-315 S. State St. Thursday, at 7 p.m. and May 16, 7-8:30 p.m., at the Ann Arbor District Library, 343 S. Fifth Ave.

News and notes

- Whitmore Lake resident Loren Estleman has published his 18th Amos Walker book, "Nicotine Kiss." This installment in the Shamus Award-winning series finds the Detroit private detective searching for an acquaintance, on the wrong side of the law, who has disappeared. The mystery incorporates a post-Sept. 11 plot twist and Booklist suggests its chase scenes are "tailor-made for the screen." It follows a pair of 2005 releases, a Peter Macklin crime novel "Little Black Dress" and a historical western, "The Undertaker's Wife."

Estleman also expects to release another new title, "The Adventures of Johnny Vermillion" in May. This one's described as a "rollicking comic western."

- 2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi appears at the Michigan Theater May 6 at 5 p.m.

On a U.S. tour to promote her new memoir "Iran Awakening: A Memoir of Revolution and Hope," she is expected to discuss the war in Iraq, the Bush administration doctrine of exporting democracy and Iran's nuclear capabilities as well as the book.

A lawyer, human rights activist and author, Ebadi has campaigned for democracy and greater rights for Iranian women and children - efforts that have brought her into conflict with conservative clerics.

A graduate of Tehran University, she was the first female judge in her country. With the establishment of an Islamic republic in 1979, however, she was forced to resign as the clerics decided women should not hold such posts.

Ebadi turned to the practice of law and took on controversial cases, defending activists for women's rights and other causes.

Ebadi has also written books calling for greater legal protection for Iranian children and has been jailed after coming into conflict with the law in Iran.

Married with two grown-up daughters, she is credited with promoting the reform of Iranian family laws by seeking changes in divorce and inheritance legislation.

Information about author appearances and book-related events appears daily on The News' "Happenings" page, E8 today. The dates also appear in "Spotlight," the weekly entertainment tabloid published on Thursdays. Please send book news to the Connection Desk, The Ann Arbor News, 340 E. Huron St., Ann Arbor, MI 48106; or e-mail booknews@annarbornews.com.

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Governor Granholm Declares May as Foster Care Month in Michigan

May 2, 2006

LANSING – Governor Jennifer M. Granholm has declared May 2006 Foster Care Month in Michigan. The governor's announcement highlights the fact that approximately 19,000 Michigan children and youths are living with about 7,600 foster care families.

Foster Care Month provides an opportunity to make Michigan residents more aware of the foster care services available in the state and of the efforts of the various individuals, agencies and organizations dedicated to improving the foster care system.

"This month is a time to show special appreciation for foster families who have opened their homes and hearts to foster children," Marianne Udow, Michigan Department of Human Services director, said. "They strive to offer the best care possible for children in need, not only during Foster Care Month, but everyday."

Children usually enter foster care, at least temporarily, because they have been abused or neglected at home. Foster care families are trained by DHS and private child placing agencies to provide safe, stable and supportive homes for them.

"Children are our most precious resource," Udow said. "It is critical that we work together to do everything we can not only to ensure the safety of our children, but also to provide them with a stable environment in which they are surrounded by adults who care about them and will help them learn and grow."

Foster families play a vital role in the lives of children in crisis. They help reconnect children to families and steer them toward successful adulthood, or help them prepare for adoption by a permanent family once parental rights have been terminated by the court.

"When children must be removed from their families because of abuse or neglect, they often don't understand why and are frightened and confused," Udow said. "Suddenly, they're in a new environment, a new home, while their entire identity is still wrapped up in the parents, siblings, extended family, neighbors and friends they've left behind. Caring foster families help by easing children's anxieties and making them feel loved and secure in unfamiliar new surroundings."

Developing an adequate number of foster homes to meet the varied backgrounds of children entering foster care is a priority of the Department of Human Services. In partnership with clients and communities, DHS cultivates quality foster care home placement resources and works to develop, train and support responsible families so they can provide safe nurturing environments for children placed in out-of-home care.

-MORE-

Page 2 of 2 . . . May is Foster Care Month in Michigan

The department provides monthly payments to reimburse foster families for some of the costs involved in caring for a child, clothing and holiday allowances, regional and statewide training, and help with the licensing process.

For more information about foster parenting, visit the DHS Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs

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